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Walter Scott and the American Historical Novel

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In 1835, Catharine Maria Sedgwick published *The Linwoods; or, "Sixty Years Since" in America*, a patriotic tale combining public facts with domestic fictions of the War of Independence but also implicitly acknowledging the possibility of a gradual national forgetting. As Sedgwick declares in her preface, the young must learn about their country's past in order "to deepen their gratitude to their patriot-fathers; a sentiment that will tend to increase their fidelity to the free institutions transmitted to them." History, here, protects the interests of the present and the future. The subtitle of *The Linwoods* seems to guarantee the fiction's historicity by association with Walter Scott's first novel, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814), a tale of the failed 1745 Jacobite uprising in Britain. In 1835, three years after his death, Scott continued to command prestige and unsurpassed authority in historical fiction. Having invoked Scott, however, Sedgwick evades him, declaring herself innocent of "a charge of such insane vanity" as likening her project to that of "the great Master." In claiming to have selected her subtitle "simply to mark the period of the story," she essentially dismisses him as anything more than a marketable ploy. In fact, characters and situations in *The Linwoods* repeatedly echo Scott. "The pythoness Effie" (ch. 1) recalls both Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering* (1815) and Norna of the Fitful-head in *The Pirate* (1822)—via, disconcertingly, Scott's most sexualized heroine, Effie Deans from *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818). Like Norna, Sedgwick's Effie is fortune teller to two contrasting heroines, Bessie Lee

and Isabella Linwood, each with her own imaginary genealogy of Scott heroines, from Lucy Ashton (*The Bride of Lammermoor*, 1819) to Alice Lee (*Woodstock*, 1826). Yet “*Sixty Years Since*” in *America* also hints at the possible superiority of the American past, inviting readers to imagine that rebellion had brought national unity and a new beginning, rather than exile, exclusion, or ideological compromise. Sedgwick’s deceptively simple homage exposes the problem that this chapter explores: the complications of Scott’s role in the fictionalization of America’s past.

Scott has always loomed as an important figure in American literary history. As George Dekker emphasizes in the most detailed full-length study of US historical fiction: “Inspired by Scott’s affectionate, indeed patriotic, evocations of the scenes and manners of old Scotland, American historical romancers turned to the histories of their own states and regions for the matter of their fictions” (1987, 62). Scott’s example shaped an entire style of thought. His importance for American writers derived in part from a shared inheritance in Scottish Enlightenment culture—in Scottish “Common Sense” philosophy, in stadial models of social development, and in Enlightenment historiography. But Americans also responded to specific aspects of his subject matter and artistry. Tales of religious and political division such as *The Tale of Old Mortality* (1816), *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, and *Peveril of the Peak* (1822) were directly interpretable in terms of life in the British American colonies. Scott also returned repeatedly to the subject of revolution, potent in the new contexts of the early United States and of the increasingly disunited states of the nineteenth century. Just as importantly, Scott explicitly wrote histories of Scotland in the context of its constitutional union with England, creating a national identity precisely because such identity must now function imaginatively and emotionally, rather than politically. However, entangled in what Washington Irving called Scott’s “benign” influence on American literary culture lie some sharper questions about authority, cultural authenticity, and the ideological freight of literary

genre.

For acknowledgments of Scott's importance have also, traditionally, contained seeds of discontent. Dekker's emphasis on the "readily adaptable model"—for example, the interweaving of fictional plots with historical events—available in *Waverley* and its successors inevitably positions American literature as secondary, as deriving from Old World narrative and representational structures (1987, 8); while Leslie A. Fiedler's castigation of the impact Scott's "middlebrow imagination" and nostalgic conservatism had on an American national literature written "for boys" (1960, 164, 181) continues to influence perceptions. Even if Mark Twain had never indicted Scott as the cause of the American Civil War or associated him (in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1884) with a wrecked Mississippi river boat, the decline in his literary reputation by 1900 would have tainted the perceived achievement of his successors. Scott's influence came to be seen as having impeded American originality, and this has led to a defensive rhetoric of American "counterparts," "equivalents," and "translation." Some accounts of American fiction thus dissociate it from the formal and social conservatisms Scott represented by aligning it instead with older forms of allegory, romance, and fantasy. The border between "novel" and "romance" became a recurring preoccupation of American novelists (prominent in commentaries by William Gilmore Simms, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and most influentially in Henry James's 1907 preface to the New York Edition of *The American*) and of critics from F. O. Matthiessen and Richard Chase to those who have disputed their readings, including Nina Baym, Elissa Greenwald, Michael Davitt Bell, G. R. Thompson, and Eric Carl Link. One might say that the difficulty posed by Scott's centrality has redirected the entire flow of subsequent interpretations of American fiction.

This special literary relationship now requires reinterpretation. Scott was central, but he was also far more various and experimental than critics' reflections on "the *Waverley*

model” as a paradigm for works of historical fiction have suggested. Also, models change. In 1960 Fiedler’s *Love and Death in the American Novel* represented the accepted view of Scott: “As an artist, Scott is deficient in moral intelligence, clumsy in style, inadequate in characterization . . . untidy in form; as a maker of legends, however, he possesses authenticity and greatness” (174). Today, scholarship has transformed that view. The *Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels* (1993–2012) has established his texts in ways truer to his original intentions, restoring in the process his careful artistry and commitment to literary aesthetics. His works command new readerships and a revised cultural significance, not least in the United States. Critically, it is easier now to look beyond “the *Waverley* model,” always somewhat misaligned with American tradition, and to consider traditionally less venerated works by Scott that resonated in America. *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, for example, from the Third Series of *Tales of My Landlord* (1819), deals succinctly with a complex series of allegiances and hostilities, entwining with the conflict between Montrose and Argyll in 1644–45 the fate of an “outlaw” group of Highlanders called the Children of the Mist. Like the better-known works of the four series of *Tales of My Landlord* (including *The Tale of Old Mortality*, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, and *The Bride of Lammermoor*), *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose* has a frame narrative set in the early nineteenth century: in this case, describing a veteran of the peninsular campaign against Napoleon and his allies, Sergeant More MacAlpin, who has settled in the Borders after finding the Highland glen of his childhood deserted as a result of forced displacement. *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose* quietly confounds many ingrained assumptions about Scott: notably that he avoided the controversial Clearances, or that he imposed on historical conflict a romanticizing perspective governed by the rules of the picturesque. The outlaws of the Mist (a “wild tribe” of “children” [ch. 19], an “unhappy race” [ch. 20]) increasingly dominate the latter half of the novel; their rhetoric is conspicuously modeled on the “last of the race” discourse which, by 1819, linked

representations of Scottish Highlanders and American Indians and had already been used by Scott in his 1818 *Rob Roy*. The long dying speech of Ranauld MacEagh to his “young savage” grandson is indebted to at least half a century of Scottish-American representational practice, from Ossian in the 1760s to Thomas Campbell’s *Gertrude of Wyoming* in 1809; but it could stand independently as an influence on subsequent American writing: “We are now a straggling handful, driven from every vale by the sword of every clan, who rule in the possessions where their forefathers hewed the wood, and drew the water to ours. But in the thicket of the wilderness, and in the mist of the mountain, Kenneth, son of Eracht, keep thou unsoil’d the freedom which I leave thee as a birth-right” (ch. 22). Typically of Scott, the narrative turns from this ending to linger on others which it treats as more legitimate (the marriage/inheritance plot and the subsequent histories of its “main” characters). American writers proved especially sensitive to this disjunctive way of suggesting historical continuity, so that Scott’s influence continues to register technically and structurally even when writers might seem to have moved far beyond his historical subject matter of clans, loyalties, and ideologies in conflict.

Just as Scott’s acquaintance with traditional representations of American Indians lay behind his account of the Children of the Mist (and Highland clans elsewhere), America itself influenced his career and imaginative development. Scott’s earliest political memories were associated with the reports he heard of the Revolutionary War in America; and in the frame narrative of his last publication, the two novels in the Fourth Series of *Tales of My Landlord* (1831), the supposed author’s brother absconds to America to publish the unrevised manuscripts there. This fiction reflects a fact of Scott’s publishing career. Several American publishing houses (including M. Carey and Son and Edwin T. Scott in Philadelphia, S. G. Goodrich in Hartford, and J. Seymour, J. & J. Harper, and E. Duyckinck in New York) assembled parts of Scott’s novels from uncorrected second-stage proofs, expediting

publication in the United States and preserving a stage in the editorial process that would otherwise now be invisible. Many novels from the early 1820s onward were published in the United States in significantly different form, these pirated editions preserving many readings corrected or revised by Scott and his compositors at the last stage of prepublication in Britain. In the late 1830s, anger at the way in which Scott had been deprived of earnings from his novels in the United States fueled the drive for copyright legislation in Britain.

Scott was also well read and well connected as an interpreter of American history. His library at Abbotsford contained about 200 works relating to North America. He had a succession of American guests at Abbotsford and corresponded with some of the new scholarly custodians of US culture, including George Ticknor, through whose offices Scott, like Robert Southey, became an honorary member of the Massachusetts Historical Society. When American writers of historical fiction cited Scott, it was not only because he had acquired a unique cultural status as an external model, but also because Scott's intellectual inclusiveness had always been alert to American history—to its continuities with British history and also to its differences. In 1821 Scott's publisher, Archibald Constable, urged him to write a historical novel on the subject of Pocahontas. Scott declined, arguing that such a tale could only be written by someone who "understood" American Indian customs and manners. He nominated Irving, with whom he maintained a close transatlantic friendship. Irving's *Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey* (1835) describes his four-night visit in August–September 1817, part of the tour which led to *The Sketch Book* (1819–20). Scott first read Irving in 1813 in *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* by "Diedrich Knickerbocker" (1809). Scott and Irving rivaled each other as inventors of authorial and pseudo-editorial personae, and Irving's gratitude for Scott's role in securing John Murray as the publisher of *The Sketch Book* is recorded in his 1848 preface to the revised edition. Irving's account of his 1817 visit presents Scott as both attentive and

indifferent to social rank, as rooted in the traditions of the Scottish Borders, but fascinated by other cultures and histories, and excited to think of being “in the midst of one of [America’s] grand wild original forests” amid trees which would shame “the pigmy monuments of Europe.” Irving’s feeling that “it seemed as if a little realm of romance was suddenly opened before me” ostensibly validates the view of Scott (traditional by 1835) as the guardian of legend and folklore, the living proof as well as the purveyor of “real history.” Irving emphasizes his role as guest in the house, though he is also, as narrator, the controller of Scott’s “little” realm. Even to this most Anglophilic and traditionalist American observer, Scott’s energies seem caught up in what Irving regards as “inferior” things: his dogs, his favorite employees and dependents, leisure rather than work. By 1835, too, the old farmhouse Irving had visited in 1817 had disappeared, in its place the baronial mansion completed in 1825, just as the Scott with whom Irving prudently never discussed the (anonymous) authorship of *Waverley* and its successors had long since become public property, internationally. Irving’s essay memorializes and honors Scott and a traditional milieu which, because of him, remains alive; but it also silently contains and contextualizes these things in a broader, freer play of imagination and cultural connection—something imaginably American.

In the traditional trajectory of literary history, that is, Scott appears as the honored precursor of an eventually freer American style. His second novel, *Guy Mannering*, however, suggests a more intriguing possibility. *Guy Mannering* pivots on moments of uncanny recognition. It shows memory to be simultaneously superficial, pragmatic, and assured, as well as magical, inexplicable, and spellbound. *Guy Mannering*’s literary debts seem clear: to Shakespeare’s *Othello* and late romance-plays, and the fictions of Tobias Smollett and Maria Edgeworth. In his introduction to the Magnum Opus edition, Scott anchored the novel in local and personal memory, quoting his sources on the Galloway gypsies and recalling his childhood memories of particular gypsy figures. More recently, critics have emphasized the

significance of the (Asian) Indian subtext; however, the chapter relating the Derncleuch displacement quotes a passage from John Leyden's poem *Scenes of Infancy* (1803) beginning "So the red Indian, by Ontario's side" (ch. 8), and a later chapter describes Meg Merrilies as a defiant defender of her tribe, "the wild chieftainess of the lawless people amongst whom she was born" (ch. 55). The action of *Guy Mannering* is ringed by Britain's colonial difficulties in North America, from Mannering's initial Scottish tour of 1760 to late 1782, and the disruptions—especially the financial disruptions—caused by the American war complicate its plot.

Scholarship thickens the making of this plot. Born in Philadelphia a few months before Scott, Charles Brockden Brown shared his contemporary's experience of childhood illness and lasting infirmity; trained for the law but was privately absorbed in reading; and explicitly set out to build a distinctive national literature, most clearly in his address "To the Public," which prefaced *Edgar Huntly: or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (1799). Brown wrote and published *Edgar Huntly* between Parts One and Two of *Arthur Mervyn* (1799 and 1800); and the name "Arthur Mervyn" reappears in Scott's *Guy Mannering* as Mannering's old friend, responsible for looking after Mannering's daughter Julia but notably unsuccessful in protecting her from the romancing of a young man called Brown.

Although *Guy Mannering* contains some first-person epistolary narrative, its literary style is entirely distinct from that of *Edgar Huntly*, and any similarities of plot are broadly generic. The whole of *Edgar Huntly* is narrated in the first person, and at least two principal narrators are on the edge of mania and delusion. Set in 1787 in Pennsylvania, *Edgar Huntly* combines the stories of two sleepwalkers—the American, Huntly, who is haunted by the unsolved murder of his friend Henry Waldegrave; and the Irish emigrant, Clithero—who pursue each other through the wilderness of the Norwalk. As a result of his sleepwalking, Huntly lies injured in an underground maze; is tracked by, and eventually kills, four

American Indians; and visits and revisits an isolated hut in which, hidden from view, he witnesses scenes of violence. The hut, he eventually realizes, is the retreat of a Delaware Indian called Old Deb. Although she is not mentioned until the final third of the novel, Old Deb holds the key to all its mysteries. Thirty years before the action of the novel, the Delawares have been driven from their ancient lands by the “perpetual encroachments of the English colonists.” Edgar’s uncle’s farmstead now occupies the land on which the village of the “clan,” as he calls them, once stood. Wielding special authority, “zeal and eloquence,” however, Deb opposes the Delawares’ exile and is determined to “maintain possession of the land.” Despite being savagely opposed to what he regards as the “savage,” Huntly has formed a childhood bond with Deb and has nicknamed her Queen Mab because of what he calls “her pretensions to royalty, the wildness of her aspect and garb, her shrivelled and diminutive form, a constitution that seemed to defy the ravages of time and the influence of the elements” (ch. 20).

On several different levels, then, *Edgar Huntly* traces the consequences, public and psychological, of an enforced dispossession and removal. In terms of the Philadelphia in which Brown was writing in the late 1790s, this fiction of the recent past swivels guiltily on the half-acknowledged savagery of the white displacer and the potentially schizophrenic new country he represents. *Edgar Huntly* suggests the cultural and psychological elisions of modern nationhood in a way no other fiction had done before it. In some respects, *Guy Mannering* puts right what Brown had left unresolved in *Edgar Huntly*, not only restoring its hero to his rightful inheritance and name but also giving him, in *Mannering*, a benevolent father-figure (unlike Brown’s sinister and ambiguous Sarsefield). In other ways, it revisits Brown’s fictive territory, and the romance terrain of the dark, winding, secretive landscape—forked pathways, hollows, caves, subterranean passageways. Scott found in *Edgar Huntly* a way of spatializing scientific and moral analyses of states of mental distortion and

breakdown. The most intriguing connections are those between Old Deb and Meg Merrilies. Deb is diminutive, Meg tall; Deb permanently displaced and silenced in the narrative, Meg brought to its center and sentimentalized as the loyal protector of the novel's hero. Scott gives Meg an idiosyncratic, persuasive, voice, as well as language that recalls Chief Logan's speech to Lord Dunmore, recorded in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), and that reinforces the American Indian share in her imaginative heritage.

Brown reviewed Scott's poetry in the *Literary Magazine* in 1805, but Scott does not discuss Brown in his letters or *Journal*, nor in any of his novels, introductions, or notes; although when he put together *Ballantyne's Novelist's Library* in the early 1820s he planned to include novels by Brown. Only one other thread of evidence connects them. Samuel Griswold Goodrich describes in his 1856 autobiography, *Recollections of a Lifetime*, a dinner at the Lockharts' on June 2, 1824, after which Sophia Lockhart (Scott's elder daughter) politely initiated a conversation on American topics. Cooper is discussed first, though Scott is unable to join in the assessment of *The Pioneers*, not having read it. John Gibson Lockhart then declares that, good as Cooper is, in his opinion Brown was "the most remarkable writer of fiction that America has produced," especially in his depictions of the "darker passions." Scott replies, "Brown had wonderful powers, as many of his descriptions show; but I think he was led astray by falling under the influence of bad examples, prevalent at his time. Had he written his own thoughts, he would have been, perhaps, immortal: in writing those of others, his fame was of course ephemeral" (ltr. 42). The flow of influence seems clear: Brown, like American literature in general, was regarded as essentially imitative. Nor do Scott's views on Brown sound at all promising. However, the evidence of his library at Abbotsford suggests a different story. Scott owned early 1820s editions of four of Brown's novels, the first published versions of which date from 1798 to 1800. He also owned the London (1822) edition of William Dunlap's 1815 *Memoirs of Charles Brockden Brown*. Three of Brown's

novels in the Abbotsford library, however, are earlier London editions: Brown's last novel, *Jane Talbot* (1801; London, 1804), *Philip Stanley* (London, 1807; published in America as *Clara Howard*, 1801), and *Edgar Huntly*, which Scott owned in the Minerva Press edition of 1803. Whatever Scott thought after dinner in 1824, in 1803 he must have felt himself to be in the vanguard of discovering a new literature; and he was sufficiently interested to read more. Fourteen years after Brown's death, he could assess Brown's fame as "of course ephemeral," though in fact Brown's reputation in Britain revived throughout the 1820s, and in 1831 *Edgar Huntly* was reintroduced to a general British readership as volume 10 of Bentley's Standard Novels series. The resonance of *Edgar Huntly* in *Guy Mannering* reveals that works generally accepted as precursors of American romance could also be creative recollections of American romance.

The dominance of historical fiction in the American market throughout the 1820s reflects far more than the adaptability or transferability of "the *Waverley* model." American writers conversed with Scott and competed with him throughout his years of established fame. Scott's best-known "follower," Cooper, is more accurately seen as his interlocutor. The full title of Cooper's *The Pioneers; or, The Sources of the Susquehanna* (1823) revealingly counterpoints pioneering with multiple "sources." As its final sentence proclaims, the novel projects the Leather-Stocking, and the United States, westward, "opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent" (ch. 41) while developing a plot predicated on "sourcing" the outcast hero and true heir, Oliver Edwards/Effingham. *The Pioneers* pioneers in its particular depictions of American life "thirty years since" (1793–94), in its range of character types within this historical setting, and in its independence, or wryly suggested evasions, of established narrative practice. Chapter 17, for example, Cooper's celebrated account of a turkey shoot, takes on all the conventions of semi-allegorical representations of male rivalry and female prowess, while noting both the abundance of American nature and

the wastefulness of its new possessors. This single chapter manages to be both routine and troublingly compelling. Its epigraph quotes Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) and announces its topic as "sports." Once again, the citation seems to validate, but actually marks difference, uncertainty, and aggression. *The Pioneers* references Scott in many details; on the other hand, it reflects explicitly on "American genealogy," on the social mixtures of the new world, and on democracy and republicanism in social practice (see especially ch. 18, in which the "demi-savage" Oliver is taken into Judge Temple's household). In novelistic history Cooper innovates, most of all, in his depiction of a broad range of American characters and social groups, a particularity which was criticized by some contemporaries and which he depicted, in his 1832 introduction to *The Pioneers*, as a "rigid adhesion to truth, an indispensable requisite in history and travels" that restricted the wider arts of fiction.

"Let the American reader imagine one of our mildest October mornings," Cooper writes while setting the scene in the final chapter of *The Pioneers*. The remark validates a new group of implied readers, but it also indicates the multiple readerships for which the Leather-Stocking series was designed. These tales, and Cooper's other historical fictions, have important formal and technical continuities with Scott that prepared the ground for their international success. But more extensive critical attention has been devoted to shared motifs and plot lines such as the contrasted fair (domestic) and dark-haired (tragic) heroines, the hero torn between competing ideologies representing the "past" and the "future," characters who connect past and present, and the exile or destruction of characters and causes "ardent" and/or "enthusiastic" to excess. Cooper is faithful to Scott's narratorial style and tone, keeping direct commentary and moral direction to a minimum. He continues Scott's preference for dialogue over description, though like Scott he carefully specifies historical and geographical setting. He emphasizes, as in his 1850 "Preface to the Leather-Stocking Tales," his "very desultory and inartificial manner" of composition, maintaining Scott's

declared distance from the pretensions of high art and the lure of the marketplace alike. He continues the practice of chapter epigraphs, and, like Scott, he appends historical notes that extend the descriptive and analytical reach of his fictions. Both of these latter practices implicitly defend the artistic and intellectual status of prose fiction, even as Scott and Cooper slight their own claims as artists. The implied reader in both Scott and Cooper, meanwhile, is informed, rational, but not yet familiar with the wilder locales to which the narrator acts as guide. Scott's many addresses to his "fair" readers fix assumed gender differences in response and reading preferences, though without the hostility with which Cooper advises "all young ladies, whose ideas are usually limited by the four walls of a comfortable drawing room" not to read *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826, pref.).

At the same time, Cooper consciously deviates from Scott in one particular, especially important to the history of the novel in America. This swerve, which is in fact in Harold Bloom's terms a classic misprision or willed misunderstanding of the precursor text, concerns the relationship between the authority of written and oral narrative, and the cultural status of books. All Scott's writings, in all the literary forms he practiced, highlight the tensions between received versions of "history," and the differences between hearing and reading stories. *The Antiquary* (1816), for example, apparently the most "bookish" of novels, consistently ironizes the claims of the educated antiquarian and collector. Orality, however, is necessarily transmuted to Scott's readers in the shape of printed words, and the "Author of *Waverley*" never loses his delight in books as physical objects. The book as a mark of civilized culture retains its status in nineteenth-century British fiction, but is an object of a more fundamental unease in the most self-consciously American writings of the same period. Rooted in rebellion against "written" law, American fiction's valorizations of the truth and immediacy of oral testimony gather force in Cooper. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, set in 1757 during the French and Indian War (1756–63), Hawk-eye's distrust of books as opposed to

“experience” is dramatized in his exchanges with the singing-master David Gamut in chapter 12 and with Duncan Heyward in chapters 18 and 21. Gamut himself, presented explicitly as an emasculated relic of Old World minstrelsy, irritates and puzzles modern readers, but would have struck Cooper’s contemporaries as almost too crude a satirical amalgam of characters in Scott. Gamut’s debts to the physique and deportment of *Guy Mannering*’s Dominie Sampson, in particular, would have underlined the ways in which he represents an Old World dedication to the authority of books and convention, even as Cooper’s first account of him, as a body out of all proportion to itself, tall yet diminutive, suggests untellable anxieties of influence. Although Cooper’s novels, like Scott’s, necessarily contain orality and “experience” in the form of a printed text, they set up a more resistant relationship with printed authority, a sense of a literary tradition which knows itself to be on the wrong track.

One other break with Scott and the tradition he represented is Cooper’s artistic decision to substantiate in a series of fictions an imagined, lived actuality for Leather-Stocking. Although telling different parts of Hawk-eye’s story involved different settings, historically and geographically, the decision to return to a single connecting character was essentially an act of centripetal and accumulative, rather than historical and expansive, imagination. More important than the often-repeated claim that Hawk-eye draws together different “American” traditions is the formal fact of this novelistic series, in which Cooper creates a single narrative structure for an “American” history. Scott imagined creating a series of novels depicting different periods in Scottish history, while Cooper created a single character around whom an American history could be written. In terms of literary history, this is a significant innovation, but it is especially telling in an American context, reflecting novelists’ desire to center and ground the nation.

The Prairie (1827), set in the Great Plains in 1804–05, ends with Hawk-eye’s death

and explicitly revisits characters and episodes in the first two fictions. In effect Cooper creates a fictive history of his own fictive histories, while also mapping the future of the American West. The novel remains subtly intertextual with Scott, however, with a heroine called Ellen (the most romantic of all Scott's heroines, from *The Lady of the Lake*) and an aged Sioux warrior nicknamed Le Balafré ("scar-face"), who attempts to claim the Pawnee Hard-Heart as his son. The French nickname, as Cooper notes, is traditional, but for readers of 1827 it would immediately call to mind Ludovic Lesly, "Le Balafré," an Archer of Louis XI's Scottish Guard in *Quentin Durward* (1823), a novel that introduces through the Bohemian or gypsy Hayraddin the ways of a nomadic people untamed by law or religion. As in *Guy Mannering*, Scott's depictions of gypsy dispossession were an imaginative resource for Cooper's Indians. After seven years in Europe and several historical novels about the European past (*The Bravo*, 1831; *The Heidenmauer; or, The Benedictines*, 1832; *The Headsman; or, The Abbaye des Vignerons*, 1833), Cooper reconstructed the earlier years of Leather-Stocking in *The Pathfinder; or, The Inland Sea* (1840) and *The Deerslayer; or, The First War-Path* (1841). When he ventured into the more distant American past, as he did in *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (1829), set in the time of King Philip's, or Metacom's, War (1675–76), he was refashioning for a different kind of subject matter and a different readership models of cultural conflict found in long-familiar Scott novels—most importantly *The Tale of Old Mortality* from 1816—and simultaneously engaging in a far more immediate novelistic conversation. One of Scott's best later novels, *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828), published in the United States as *St. Valentine's Day*, challenges the heroic conventions of earlier *Waverley*-style representation, pressing hard on paradigms of masculinity, and so produces one of Scott's most memorable male characters, Conachar, just as Cooper was working on his own conflicted masculine hero-substitute, Philip's Narragansett ally, Conanchet. Both are adopted into other households; both die when reintroduced to their

“true” cultures. Cooper’s Conanchet marries cross-racially his white counterpart, Ruth Heathcote or Narra-mattah, taken captive as a child. The confluence of ideas in *The Fair Maid of Perth* and *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, published a year apart, is a reminder that throughout Cooper’s writing career Scott was less a “model” or precursor than an interlocutor.

The older view of American historical fiction as dominated by Cooper has now been replaced by scholarship attentive to the different models of fiction developed by others and especially to the consciously feminized styles of Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick. From her first novel, *Hobomok* (1824), set in seventeenth-century New England, to her last, *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), Child highlighted women’s experiences of historical events and aligned race with gender in (failed) opposition to social convention. In works like *The Rebels* (1825), this was relatively uncontroversial, and Child was astute in working within accepted sentimental conventions and contexts. In *Hobomok*, too, the interracial marriage between Hobomok and Mary Conant is eventually superseded by a marriage that ensures a “white” family line. Even so, as Carolyn L. Karcher points out, the novel essentially allows Mary to take both her rival lovers, only-just-acceptably negotiating questions of race and of female desire. The problem of race in emerging American society pressed the conventions developed in Scott’s fiction to their limits; though even as late as *A Romance of the Republic*, written and published during Reconstruction, the names of Child’s mixed-race sisters, Rosa and Flora Royal, recall those of the two heroines of *Waverley*. In terms of technique, Child writes limber tales that she nevertheless traces to older “authorities,” including Scott. The brief frame narrative of *Hobomok*, and the move away from the “uncouth spelling” of an old manuscript in chapter 2, are pared-down versions of characteristic Scott-inflected conventions, and Scott is cited in the frame narrative as someone at once all-conquering and inimitable, “a high and solitary shrine” (pref.). Although

their explicit references to Scott are few, Child and Sedgwick seem to feel his influence differently—Child unabashed by his “proud, elastic tread” (*Hobomok*, pref.); Sedgwick more self-consciously entangled.

All Sedgwick’s historical novels—*A New-England Tale* (1822), *Redwood* (1824), *Hope Leslie* (1827), and *The Linwoods*—alternately invoke and revoke Scott’s authority. *Redwood* adapts the techniques and some of the motifs of Scott’s first two novels (*Waverley* and *Guy Mannering*). But revolt is clear in the preface, which repeats claims made in the first chapter of *Waverley* about constant “principles of human nature” only to emphasize that these manifest themselves differently in different times and different countries; lauds “the Unknown” and his new category of “what is called historical romance,” but adds that we also need accounts of the present; and describes the United States as intrinsically more exciting in its “expanding energy and rapid improvement” even than models of perfection: “The future lives in the present.” Sedgwick’s most successful novel, *Hope Leslie*, incorporates elements of Scott’s earlier fictions and also suggests the influence of his most recent, *Woodstock*. The courtship rivalry of the first-generation characters repeats elements of Scott’s novel, while the second generation (the generation of the novel’s heroine, Hope) represents a self-consciously “American” new beginning both fictionally and historically. Again, individual characters echo Scott’s (Nelema, eventually tried for witchcraft, refashions Old Alice from *The Bride of Lammermoor*), chapter epigraphs continue Scott’s practice and cite American authors, and discursive notes support details of depiction (most concern the depiction of Indian characters, especially the heroic Magawisca). At the same time, Sedgwick’s deferral to Cooper makes clear his perceived preeminence on Native American subjects. As in *The Linwoods*, there are signs of struggle in Sedgwick’s relationship with the historicity of her materials. When William Hubbard unsuccessfully seeks Hope’s hand in marriage, for example, the narrator notes caustically that in refusing she “lost at least the golden opportunity of illustrating

herself by a union with the future historian of New-England” (ch. 11); then, ironically, Sedgwick intersperses unattributed quotations from Hubbard’s account of the Indian Wars with her own narrative, while expressly championing the version of the Pequot wars which Everell Fletcher hears from Magawisca. Everell is familiar with the colonists’ accounts of Indian atrocities:

[B]ut he had heard them in the language of the enemies and conquerors of the Pequods; and from Magawisca’s lips they took a new form and hue; she seemed, to him, to embody nature’s best gifts, and her feelings to be the inspiration of heaven. This new version of an old story reminded him of the man and the lion in [Aesop’s] fable. But here it was not merely changing sculptors to give the advantage to one or the other of the artist’s sculptures; but it was putting the chisel into the hands of truth, and giving it to whom it belonged. (ch. 4)

Magawisca’s (female) account transcends rivaling claims and is (or at least “seems” to Everell to be) “truth.” In the larger narrative of *Hope Leslie*, as narratorial comments throughout the final chapter reveal, there is an anxiety about the danger of modern “forgetting,” an amnesia and disconnectedness which devalue the sufferings and idealisms of the past. Most importantly, Scott’s nuanced appreciations of the culture of his own times bifurcate then solidify in fictions like *Hope Leslie*. The implicit narratorial validation of Magawisca’s account, for example, is difficult to reconcile with the historical perspective offered in the final chapter of *Hope Leslie*, in which the Puritan founders are represented as visionaries who see multitudes replace the “solitary savage,” cities replace forests, and highways replace “the tangled foot-path,” while (in a supremely ironic phrase) “the consecrated church” rises “on the rock of heathen sacrifice” (ch. 27).

All Sedgwick’s novels were published near simultaneously in the United States and in Britain, emphasizing the extent to which the market for American fiction remained

transatlantic. For other writers of American historical fiction, London and Edinburgh were the primary places of publication. Cooper is a prominent example of this, but a more intricately transatlantic publishing career is that of John Neal. Neal co-wrote a history of the American Revolution and planned a history of American literature, while being closely involved in literary circles in London and Edinburgh throughout the 1820s. His most interesting novels are *Brother Jonathan* (1825), written in Britain and published in London and Edinburgh, and the Salem witchcraft tale *Rachel Dyer* (1828). An important and extensive authorial reflection at the opening of volume 2 of *Brother Jonathan* anatomizes conventional terms for, and representations of, “the Original North American:—the native, and legitimate Proprietor of the Western World” (ch. 14), asserting his cultural uniqueness and the failure of previous literature to give anything other than generalized accounts of him. Neal’s own representations of Indian characters unravel linguistically, however, revealing the breach in conventional representation between supposedly realistic renditions of the hero’s speech (“You no fight?—you fight?—Ole oomans—wite hart—you speak ´um lie—bad lie”) and supposed translations from “the beautiful Seneca speech” that produces speeches like “Farewell; farewell, for aye. She told me that I should sing my death song, yet, in the ears of my own white brother” (v. 2, ch. 17). *Brother Jonathan* represents a recurrent strain in transposing Scott’s interests to American subject matter in that it is more eloquently elegiac in its treatment of the survivors of “older” forms of society than Scott ever allowed himself to be; while, at the same time, the very prominence and directness of the elegiac mode reveals a stronger commitment to social “progress” than Scott ever endorsed. In the case of *Brother Jonathan*, in particular, the action and its implications repeatedly echo the situations of *The Tale of Old Mortality* and *Rob Roy*, Neal’s superimposition of those novels serving to reveal their very different approaches to historical material but also responding to the retreats from historical representation that Scott’s endings enforce on his readers.

Scott's influence in the US South has always commanded special interest. *Anne of Geierstein* (1829), which features the Germanic Vehme-gericht, influenced the formation of the Ku Klux Klan, and the Klan drew elements of its rituals from the poem *The Lady of the Lake*. Scott's influence on historical fiction in the South, however, as distinct from his popularity among readers, is concentrated in the postbellum period, and at its strongest in the historical writings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this later period, Scott's novels proved especially useful in negotiating narratives of defeat and spiritual, artistic, or quasi-national survival—that is, in preserving identity in emotional and spiritual rather than in political or institutional terms. However, a very different use of Scott, and a conspicuous stylistic departure from “the *Waverley* model,” can be found in the prolific antebellum writings of the Charleston-based novelist and editor William Gilmore Simms. In a largely positive essay, “Cooper, His Genius and Writings,” (later reprinted as “The Writings of James Fenimore Cooper”), Simms cites Scott's novels as examples of “the harmonious achievement” of a fictional world (*Views and Reviews* 1962, 265). The phrase is striking, the tone untroubled. Simms's novels silently adopt some of Scott's conventions but are essentially forward looking, treating the matter of history as something to get right rather than to complicate, and focusing instead on action, pace, and immediacy of impression. In his best-known work, *The Yemassee* (1835), the structure of contrasting ideologies has been traced to Scott, chapters are given (unattributed) poetical epigraphs, and two chapters (11 and 25) include passages of “Indian” poetry and prophecy. The relative sparseness of Simms's characterizations and contextualizations serve an ethically (and ethnically) clear-cut America. The purpose of evoking the past has, simply, changed, as is evident in many technical details and shifts such as the change to the present tense in the account of Harrison's rescue of Bess Matthews at the end of chapter 49.

After *The Yemassee*, the Revolutionary War became Simms's main focus, dominating

eight of his novels, but Simms also emphasized the distinct locales of the southern states and marketed his novels by location (*Guy Rivers: A Tale of Georgia*, 1834; *Richard Hurdis; or, The Avenger of Blood: A Tale of Alabama*, 1838, and comparable tales of Mississippi, Kentucky, Florida, and Texas). The expansiveness of his fictional topics in itself proclaims the variety available in American history and the new glamour of regional difference. Just as forays into the more distant American past (such as *The Lily and the Totem; or, The Huguenots in Florida*, 1850) emphasized the master narrative of American freedom, secession and civil war came to dominate Simms's present. Although they owe their appeal to the "romance" of "history," Simms's fictions of frontier struggles, American Indian warfare, and Revolutionary patriotism have an unexpected relationship to temporal change. The influence of Cooper's practice can be seen in the relationship between *The Partisan* (1835), *Mellichampe* (1836), and *Katharine Walton* (1851), in that *Mellichampe* and *Katharine Walton* develop episodes and characters in *The Partisan* rather than moving forward in time. Simms's theorizations, notably the claim in "The Epochs and Events of American History, as Suited to the Purposes of Art in Fiction" (1845) that "the poet and romancer are only strong where the historian is weak" (*Views and Reviews* 1962, 76), typically raise more questions than they answer. In his advertisement to *Mellichampe* he states that the "entire materials" and "the leading events—every general action—and the main characteristics, have been taken from the unquestionable records of history, and—in the regard of the novelist—the scarcely less credible testimonies of that venerable and moss-mantled Druid, Tradition." Technically, Simms's novels respond primarily to the new terrains and epochs made available by Scott, and they reflect an emerging punchiness and concentration on dramatic contrast and event, something marked in the striking chapter titles adopted in his later novels ("The Half-Breed and the Tory," "Picture of Lynch-Law," "Swamp Strategies," "Cow-Chasing"—all from *Mellichampe*). Despite Simms's technical

and tonal shift toward a more direct, less bookish style, reflections of Scott are still evident in the late novel *The Forayers* (1855), which features Scottish Highlanders exiled after the 1745 Jacobite rebellion but loyal to George III during the Revolutionary War, and bardic interludes that take readers back to the “authenticity” of re-creations like Canto 6 of Scott’s poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). In the “Introduction: Historical Summary” of this late novel, Simms reprises the terms of chapter 1 of *Waverley*, stating that, as in previous fictions, he has sought to subordinate history to “other events” that “illustrate the social condition of the country, under the influence of those strifes and trials which give vivacity to ordinary circumstances, and mark with deeper hues, and stronger colors, and sterner tones, the otherwise common progress of human hopes and fears, passions and necessities.”

The complications of “bookish” textuality and oral tradition are especially important in Hawthorne’s historical fictions. Hawthorne’s links with Scott are obvious on the level of subject matter, and his Puritans, in particular, are shaped in part by Scott’s. *Fanshawe* (1828), Hawthorne’s “negligible” and anonymous first novel regarded as “an imitation of Scott” (Dekker 1987, 131), shares character names with Scott and is set “about eighty years since” (ch. 1)—that is, “about” the same time as *Waverley*. To a heroine who reads as many romances as Lucy Ashton, a legend-haunted fountain indebted to the Mermaiden’s Well from the same novel (*The Bride of Lammermoor*), and inn and hovel scenes that recall *The Antiquary* and *Kenilworth* (1821), Hawthorne adds a “blighted” scholar-hero who has spent his youth “in solitary study, in conversation with the dead” (ch. 2). This hostility toward moribund textuality, constant throughout Hawthorne’s fiction, is in direct, though undeclared, conflict with Scott’s antiquarianism. Of the inscription on the rock that marks the grave of the novel’s villain, Butler, Hawthorne writes, “Traces of letters are still discernible; but the writer’s many efforts could never discover a connected meaning” (ch. 9). In this detail lies the heart of Hawthorne’s mode of historical fiction, and in it, too, a fascination with the found

object that recurs in many of his stories and frame narratives (see, for example, the poignant revivification conjured by the chance discovery of an old arrow-head in “The Old Manse,” 1846), and which echoes iconic moments in Scott (see Aiken Drum’s Lang Ladle in chapter 4 of *The Antiquary*). In Hawthorne’s preface to his last completed novel, *The Marble Faun* (1860; published in Britain as *Transformation* a month before its appearance in the United States), it is the ideal reader who is imagined as “under some mossy gravestone, inscribed with a half-obliterated name which I shall never recognize.” Although, notoriously, this preface declares that “no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery” is available to writers “in the annals of our stalwart republic,” the act of interpretation is as fragile and haunted here as in any of Hawthorne’s writings. In many ways, *The Marble Faun* is an antihistorical novel. Insistently, its Rome lies “like a long decaying corpse” (ch. 36). The “massiveness of the Roman Past” voids the present of substance and reality (ch. 1): it “will crowd everything else out of my heart,” fears the American copyist, Hilda (ch. 12), who has sacrificed her originality to “the immortal pencils of old” (ch. 6). The materiality of the novel’s account of Rome and its artifacts, however, has distracted attention from its questioning of novelistic tradition and its still-close relationship with Scott. True to the fascination with *The Bride of Lammermoor* notable in *Fanshawe*, Hawthorne refashions Wolf’s Crag as Donatello’s tower at Monte Beni and extends the legend of the fountain nymph. Blood seeps from a corpse in the presence of its murderer, a tradition crucial to chapter 11 of *The Fair Maid of Perth*. Miriam’s identity and secrets generate competing narratives, something that Hawthorne admits in his original final chapter characterizes any story, “whether we call it history or romance” (ch. 50). The terms reverberate from Scott, as does the tension between the artist’s need for secrets and his readers’ demands for “further elucidations respecting the mysteries of the story” (Conclusion).

In his greatest historical fiction, *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance* (1850), Hawthorne

sets out not to explain the past or to make it legible but, again, to emphasize its fragile survival as an incomplete set of signs and implications. As Hester stands on the scaffold at the start of the novel, the narrator states that “her mind, and especially her memory, was preternaturally active,” at a critical *present* moment assembling aspects of her past so that they take temporary shape not quite as a story but as a set of interrelated images (ch. 2). Here, Hester is a private historian, prefiguring the glimpses the novel itself will offer. Everyone in *The Scarlet Letter* is a seeker and would-be interpreter; except, in the end, Hester’s daughter Pearl, the sender of letters marked with armorial seals, who has become something to be read, but also something reabsorbed into European aristocratic tradition. The clearest indication of the relationship between *The Scarlet Letter* and Scott is not thematic or topical but technical, and it is a return to the imagined power of the found object and the fantasy of origin and transmission. Hawthorne’s deceptively indulgent, circumstantial, introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, “The Custom-House,” was originally intended to introduce a volume called *Old-Time Legends*. Its larger architecture, that is, always loomed over the novel it eventually came to serve, like an inflated return to Scott’s complicated series of paratextual tales. (Hawthorne’s soldier-collector, General Miller, is recognizably in the mold of Sergeant More MacAlpin in the frame of *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*.) The haunted house of custom (as is developed at greater length in *The House of the Seven Gables: A Romance*, 1851), is a regressive, restrictive presence, inimical to “fancy and sensibility” and to artistry. While he works there, the characters Hawthorne attempts to write into life “retained all the rigidity of dead corpses.” In order to write the American past as he wishes, he has to eject himself from American and literary “custom.” What most distinguishes Hawthorne’s historicity from Cooper’s, in this respect, is an insistence on the inescapability of the written, even as the written eludes explication and containment. In the abandoned space of the attic in the Custom House, Hawthorne discovers a bundle of papers described in visceral terms that unnervingly

echo those of the exhumation of their author, Mr. Surveyor Pue. *The Scarlet Letter* repeatedly presents the search for historical information as a form of grave robbing, a transgressive and potentially dangerous act. As Scott's Maxwell of Summertrees comments in chapter 11 of *Redgauntlet* (1824), "there are some auld stories that cannot be ripped up again with entire safety to all concerned."

With the symbolic intensity of *The Scarlet Letter*, American historical fiction seemed to have moved decisively beyond Scott and his fuller depictions of historical scenes and contexts. The historical experimentations of Melville, Poe, and, later, Twain and Faulkner, seemed to distance Scott still further from what had come to be accepted as a sparer and more concentrated "American" style. Yet *The Scarlet Letter* also anticipates these later experiments in being intricately and profoundly responsive to Scott's self-conscious textuality, linguistic and social inclusiveness, and sophisticated historical irony. As this chapter has argued, the American historical novelists reputed to have followed Scott most closely—Cooper, Child, Sedgwick, and Simms—constantly questioned and reconfigured his approach and style. Their writings show repeatedly that "the *Waverley* model" did not fit the American past or the new national present; and that expanding historical writing into the new territory of their own land also meant concentrating and, formally, curtailing it, whether through what I have called the centripetal impulse in Cooper or through Simms's pruned-back narrative style. Scott's most lasting contribution to American literature was the awareness of historical disjuncture itself—of the material, textual, presence but also the unreconstructability of the past. "But the past was not dead," Hawthorne realizes on discovering Hester's densely worked letter A in the Custom House: nor was it ever, quite, alive.

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